| Year | Countries which PM visited | Total number of journalists who accompanied PM |
|---|---|---|
| | Mauritius, Russian Federation, Maldives, Nepal, Tanzania, USA, Italy, Uganda, South Africa, Egypt and U.K. | |
| 1998 | Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Oman, Namibia, South Africa, Mauritius, USA and France | 148 |
| 1999 | Trinidad & Tobago, Jamaica and Morocco (till 28.2.99) | 48 |

**Militant activities from Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar**

991. SHRI DRUPAD BORGOHAIN: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what diplomatic action has been taken by your Government to prevent Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar Territory by the Militants of North-East region; and

(b) what success has been achieved in this field?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Government has maintained a continuous dialouge through diplomatic channels and institutional mechanisms, with the Governments of Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan for ensuring effective control over militants activities.

Matters relating to terrorism have been discussed with the Government of Bangladesh within the overall framework of discussions on security related issues between the two countries. Bangladesh and India have agreed to work together to counter terrorist activities targeted against the other. This matters has been discussed at various levels including at the Home Secretaries' talks in Dhaka in November 1998 when both sides reconfirmed their resolve not to allow undesirable elements to use their territories for actions prejudicial to the security interests of the other. Both sides agreed to share actionable intelligence towards this end.

India and Myanmar have set up institutional mechanisms for periodic discussions on measures to combat the menace of cross-border insurgency and drug-trafficking. The Government of Myanmar has assured us repeatedly that they will not allow any negative activity on their soil inimical to the national interests of India.

Diplomatic efforts are being made with Bhutan at the highest levels to prevent Bhutanese territory from being used by militants of the North East region. Government has been assured at the highest levels in Bhutan that their territory will not be allowed to be misutilised for activities inimical to India's interests.

**Passports issued in Kerala**

992. SHRI VAYALAR RAVI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a large number of applications were received in Kerala for passport;

(b) if so, the details of last three years; and

(c) what is the total number of passports issued from Trivandrum office during 1998 and the number of total pending applications for passport?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRIMATI VASUNDHARA RAJE): (a) and (b) The number of passport applications received by the Passport

Offices functioning in the State of Kerala during the last three years is as follows:

| Passport Office | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Trivandrum | 77,106 | 92,522 | 87,478 |
| Cochin | 84,710 | 1,05,615 | 1,10,120 |
| Kozhikode | 1,40,574 | 1,48,055 | 1,41,976 |

(c) The Passport Office in Trivandrum issued 82,838 passports during 1998 and the total number of pending applications at the end of the year was 7,331.

**Japan's refusal to life curbs on Loan**

993. SHRI AMAR SINGH: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Japan has declined to lift curbs on loans to India during the course of recent official meeting at Tokyo between Indian Foreign Secretary and Japanese Deputy Foreign Minister;

(b) if so, what are the reasons thereof; and

(c) what are the details of topic discussed and decision arrived at during that meeting?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Immediately following our nuclear tests in May, 1998, the Japanese government announced that they would, *inter-alia* take the following measures. Freeze grant assistance and Yen loans for new projects except projects with a humanitarian purpose; and they would examine the loans extended to India by international financial institutions. No substantive change in this position was indicated in the course of the recent official talks held by Foreign Secretary in the Japanese Foreign Ministry in Tokyo from 17-21 January, 1999.

The discussions at the Foreign Secretary level talks covered different aspects of bilateral relations as well as regional and international issues of mutual interest. Both sides agreed to proceed with intergovernmental consultations including India-Japan Trade Talks, policy dialogue between the Ministry of External Affairs of the Indian government and the Ministry of International Trade and Industry of the Government of Japan, the meeting of the India Japan Joint Commission on Science & Technology, as well as parliamentary and Cultural Exchanges.

**Indo Sri Lanka Accord as free-trade**

994. SHRI C.O. POULOSE: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the salient features of Indo-Sri Lanka accord on free-trade; and

(b) the details of the conditions attached of the proposed liberalisation of trade between the two countries?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH):

*India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Accord*

(a) and (b) The India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement was signed on 28.12.98 during the visit of the Sri Lankan President to India, wherein both countries have agreed to progressively eliminate tariffs on bilateral trade. Tariffs are to be phased out in 3 years by India on imports from Sri Lanka and in 8 years by Sri Lanka on imports from India. Tariff concessions would not be available on the items to be specified in the 'Negative List'.

For being eligible for tariff concessions, the Domestic Value Added Content (DVA), should be at least 35% of F.O.B. value, If inputs from the other contracting party are used, the value of such inputs upto 10% can be set off against the 35%. Further, the product must have undergone a manufacturing process, and, after the process, be classified in a different 4 digit level, HS code (Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System), than those in which the non-originating materials used in the